Letter to the Editor

Who is hard working in V.N.?

Dear Sirs,

I know that as a « visitor » this country, it is improp to critize my host, his c intry, government, press, business ethics, manners, intelligence, honesty, respect for his neigbors (foreigner or Vietnamese), respect for law and order (such as his good driving practices), his concern for the life and welfare of those about him. But after reading your paper daily (except Sunday) for twelve months, and hearing your side of the story I feel compelled to tell you mine.

In giving credit where credit is due, your editorials do deserve credit, credit for writing on controversial subjects and calling a spade. Although I don't always agree with what you say I will defend your right to say it (that's what 2,00,000 Americans are doing here). Of course you being Vietnamese, your view point is quite different from that of a « foreigner » (more on that word later). and I can't help but think you might be what one would call prejudice.

In the article written byMr. Cong Trinh in the Thursday March 17 issue, on education there are several small items that I can't agree with.Not that I don't think the education system needs to be reformed, far from it. That is the only thing thing that can ever save this country from Communism. How the reform is handled is for others to decide not me, but it goes deeper than just the schools. Some how the adult population has to be reformed and re-educated. My critism of Mr. Cong Trinh's article is not in the subject matter or in his comments but in the working of some of the phrases that he used. These phrases are used not only in the article by Mr. Cong Trinh; but other writers for your newspaper and the other English newspaper as well.

First I call your attention to the third paragraph where he writes,,.. «why the hard working intelligent and ambitious Vietnamese»... I would like to know just who he was refering to.

In his reference to the « hard working » he must have meant the ones who stay home and sip their tea while their daughter works in a bar or as it's refered to in the local papers, a house that entertains « flower seekers ». Or maybe the ones that stays home and takes care of the kids while their wife spends the night with a «foreigner» so daddy doesn't have to work. Then gain maybe it's the ones that are teachers. They teach the kids on the street to say, «five «P», you give me one dollar, you give me gum, you come see my sister,» yes sir those teachers sure do work hard. One group that I don't want to over look, is the Vietnamese employed by the « foreigners ». New there is a hard working class of people. One of my goals that I set when I first came, as an invited guest to this intelligent hardworking country, was to ease the work load of this unfortunate group. There are some that do work I'm sure I just haven't met any. One thing the « foreigners » have done these people is to insure them that their « Siesta) will not be interfered with. This is a wonderful custom for people at war, from 1100 until 1400 the war must stop (?).I guess that is why the «foreigners» were invited, to take over while the local hardworking people take their Siests..

When he says «intelligent» he must mean the ones that drive cars, motorcycles, pedicabs, cyclos, and push carts down one way streets the wrong way, the ones that cross streets without looking the ones that get in to the oncoming traffic lane to make a left turn at least a half a block from the intersection, the ones that turn around in the middle of the block and hold up traffic for several minutes, the ones that while wearing the uniform of the local police, stand on the corner and watch a jumbo traffic jam occur and do nothing to help or enforce the law because he doesn't know how to stop traffic on one street or the other. These must be the ones he is refering to because they arethe only type ofVietnamese I have seen in the last twelve months. But then maybe the « stupid » ones stay home all the time and I never have a chance to see them.

Ambitious. Yes Virgina there are ambitious Vietnamese. They drive taxicabs, pedicabs, cyclos, own bars, tailor shops, they sell anything or anyone from their daughter or wife to their next door neighbor. They buy and sell, from or to the «foreigner» or to the Vietnamese that deals with « foreigners » for they are the only ones that can afford to do business with these ambitious people. There is a great guiding light directing the national ambition of these «intelligent hardworking and ambitious people». That light is on top of the vault at Fort Knox and the ambition is to seperate all of the «foreigners»from their 'green'. (now called red money) The only ones in this contry that (as a group) show any ambition fall in the aforementioned catagory. I do have some (not much) respect for those people, at least they are smart enough to figure out how to make the most money for the least amount of effort. Even though I think it is directed in the wrong direction, they do have ambition.

Maybe something is lost in the translation, but I don't understand how Mr. Cong Trinh can make such a statement when he has to qualify it by saying. « ... provided of course, they have the will ... ». What is the difference between the «hard working, ambitious», and the lazy worthless unambitious. The only difference I can think of WILL, the will to get off of their lazy dead end and do something to help themselves and their country.

Words can be twisted to mean many things to many people. When Mr. Cong Trinh qualifies his statement with "provided they have the will," this means to me that either they don't have the will, or that Mr. Cong Trinh feels in his own mind that they don't have the will. In either case it means the same, they don't have the will, therefore they are not « hardworking intelligent and ambitious ». If this is in fact what he means then I agree with him 100%,if not then I am not sure just what he does mean.

Further on in his article Mr. Cong Trinh makes mention of the « Four-thousand-year-old culture ». In the time I have been in Vietnam I have heard this mentioned over and over again. so I assume it is some thing that the Vietnamese is very proud of But when I look up the word (culture) in my dictionary it is defined thus; « act of developing by education and training, a state of advancement in civilization ». After four thousand years the level of advancement is such that by «education and training» the children are taught to urinate and defecate (I hope the last word is spelled correctly) in the street in public, to stand out side (or in side if they can) of a house just to watch what is going on inside, to dump trash and garbage just anywhere they feel like, to show no respect for the law (traffic ect) or the rights of other persons. I am not saying that this is taught in the schools, but it is what they learn at home and by watching other people in every day living, and this has more of an impression on the young than all the text books combined. The parents cannot and do not teaeh discipline or respect for they do not practice these things themselves. If this is all you have to show for after four thousand years I don't think I would go around talking about it.

In your editorals you are continually «knocking» or in some way or another expressing dislike for the bar girls and women of easy virture. I am not going to say that they are or should be considered the pillars of society, but I can't agree with your views on the subject. The way you word your articles you give the impression that all of the girls chose their respective profession just for the sake of going with «foreigners» or for the money. I know many girls that work in bars, (and other places) and many of them (at least 50%) have small children but no husband T is means that they are in fact women of easy virtue and that their male companions are a disgrace to this four thousand year old culture. Yet in all but one case, (of those that I known personnaly) the oldest, meaning her first born, is 100% Vietnamese. She may have other children of mixed blood but first she has one by a VN man. Now how can that be when first she is the pillar of four thousand year old culture and second, all only do this thing with foreigners» for money.Of all the «Foreigners» in Vietnam, past, present, and probably future, I have never heard of a «foreigner» going to bed with a virgin. Now my question is this, are all of the girls born in Vietnam born nonvirgin? I don't think so. Then how did they get that way, not from the « foreigners» that's for sure.

Based on your four thousand year old culture a Vietnamese man should not marry a girl who is not a virgin. But yet it is this same man who steals this virture for the girls in Vietnam. when this happens who will have her, not a Vietnamese. She is a disgrace to her family, no one will marry her, jobs are not easy to find so she works in a bar. She figures it's time to get paid for what she had been doing for free and collect with interest. If she can make enough money this same Vietnamese man will marry her and forget that she was not so pure, Funny what a few dollars can do to ones sence of values. I would suggest that before you start down grading the love life of the «foreigners» and their women companions you wash your own linen first.

I would like to see your dictionary sometime. It must be the same one used by your competitor, FOREIGNER, all the time I read foreigner, don't you know how to spell AMERICAN ? You call Chinese, a Frenchman a Frenchman but Americans are refered to as foreigners. Maybe you are trying to keep from connecting up Americans with popular but to an American this constant reference to foreigners is derogatory.

So ends my attempt to show one more view point on the manner of living in Vietnam. Everyone thinks they know what is wrong and how to fix it, but for every thing I critize I have worked out in my own mind a solution to what I think is a problem. Some time when I have a few week I will put all of that down on paper to.

Sincerely yours,
JAMES R. KIPP
U.S. Army
(foreigner)

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